COPY

OF A

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

ALEX. MONRO, SEN. M. D.

PROFESSOR OF ANATOMY AND SURGERY,

AND

MR WILLIAM WOOD, SURGEON.

1807.

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EXTRACT from Mr W. Wood's unpublished Probationary Surgical Eſſay, referred to in the following Correſpondence.

WHEN the whole cylinder of the inteſtine is in a gangrenous ſtate, all the dead portion is to be removed; the inteſtine is to be returned into the abdomen, but its divided edges are to be retained near each other and the external wound, by ligatures paſſed though the meſentery and mouth of the ſac. This is a practice which has in many caſes proved ſucceſsful.

Mr Cooper of London has recommended, that an attempt ſhould be made to procure reunion of the divided edges of the inteſtine. The practice which he has recommended he was led to adopt, from the ſucceſsful reſult of ſome very intereſting experiments made on animals by Mr Thomſon and himſelf *. "The practice, therefore, (ſays Mr "Cooper) which ought to be followed in an in- "teſtine divided by mortification, is to cut off its "mortified extremities, and then to paſs four "ſtitches through them, one at the meſentery, and "the

* See Cooper on Hernia.

" the three others at equal diſtances round the in-
" teſtine. Then returning it to the mouth of the
" hernial ſac, which ſhould be opened higher up
" than uſual, it muſt be there firmly confined, by a
" ligature being paſſed through the meſentery, in
" the manner already directed. If ſtools paſs the
" ligatures, and the patient goes on well, the liga-
" tures may remain until they are thrown off by ul-
" ceration; but if there are no ſtools, and the pa-
" tient ſuffers from a diſtended abdomen, three of
" the ſtitches ſhould be cut away, leaving that
" which attaches the inteſtine to the hernial ſac, as
" well as that which joins its edges at the meſen-
" tery. The fæces can then readily eſcape at the
" external wound; and as granulations ariſe and
" the wound heals, the mouths of the divided in-
" teſtine will become united, ſo that the fæces will
" take their natural courſe *."

* Cooper, p. 36.

COPY

OF A

CORRESPONDENCE,

&c.

Mr WOOD *to Dr* MONRO.

SIR, *Edinburgh, April* 15. 1807.

I HAVE juſt heard, that you, yeſterday, made uſe of my name publicly in your claſs, accuſing me of having acted unjuſtly towards you with regard to ſome point connected with the ſubject of Hernia. As nothing could be further from my intention than wilfully to detract from the merit of any individual, I take the liberty to requeſt that you will inform me in writing, to what you alluded on that occaſion.

I am, Sir, your obedient ſervant,

(Signed) WILLIAM WOOD.

SIR,

Dr MONRO *to Mr* WOOD.

SIR, *Edinburgh, April* 15. 1807.

IN my lecture yeſterday on Hernia, I deſcribed to the ſtudents a method by which, when an inteſtine has been divided tranſverſely, or that a portion of it has been ſeparated from the reſt by gangrene, the ſuperior portion of it may be drawn within the inferior, and re-united to it; and I explained this farther by a ſketch, and ſaid I had done ſo in every courſe of my lectures for upwards of forty years.

I told them likewiſe, that a Mr Thorburn, who had written, in ſhort hand, notes from my lectures in the year 1770, of which many copies have been circulated, had not only taken down verbally what I had then ſaid, but had drawn on the margin of his manuſcript a rude ſketch or copy of my method.

I mentioned to them farther, that, about that time, I made an experiment of my method on the Inteſtinum Ilium of a pig with complete ſucceſs, and I demonſtrated to them the re-united parts of the inteſtine preſerved in ſpirits, of which a drawing and engraving in my poſſeſſion were made by Mr Thomas Donaldſon, who died twenty-five years ago.

I concluded with ſaying, that I was particular in mentioning the above circumſtances, becauſe young Mr W. Wood, in his Inaugural Diſſertation, aſcribed this improvement to another perſon who had aſſumed

ed it, although it *now* appears, that the whole of what is above ſtated was mentioned long before, and at the time both of them attended my courſes of lectures.

I ſaid not a ſyllable of your or the other perſon, whom I did not name, having *acted unjuſtly*, as I could not account for your or for his omiſſion; and leave to you and to him to do that now, in any way you may think proper.

I am, Sir, your obedient ſervant,

(Signed) ALEX. MONRO, *ſen.*

Mr WOOD *to Dr* MONRO.

SIR, *Edinburgh, April* 16. 1807.

WHEN I firſt heard, from ſome of your pupils, that you had made uſe of my name in your claſs, I conceived, either that the account which they gave me of what you had ſaid on that occaſion muſt have been erroneous, or that you muſt have fallen into ſome unaccountable miſtake with reſpect to the contents of my Inaugural Diſſertation. Your letter of the 15th inſtant has removed all room for doubt as to the nature of the miſtake. From that letter it appears, that you deſcribed to the ſtudents "a me-"thod by which, when an inteſtine has been divi-"ded tranſverſely, or that a portion of it has been "ſeparated

" ſeparated from the reſt by gangrene, the ſuperior " portion may be drawn within the inferior, and " re-united to it;" and that you " explained this " farther by a ſketch, and ſaid you had done ſo in " every courſe of your lectures for upwards of " forty years." The reaſon you gave for mentioning theſe circumſtances ſo particularly was, that I, in my Theſis, " had aſcribed this improvement to " another perſon, who had aſſumed it," although both I and that other perſon had attended your lectures at the time it was deſcribed by you.

If you will take the trouble of again peruſing that part of my Eſſay in which the treatment of gangrenous inteſtine is deſcribed, you will find, that, ſo far from having aſcribed to any perſon the mode of procuring re-union of divided portions of inteſtine, " by drawing the ſuperior within the inferior," *I have not, even in the ſlighteſt degree, alluded to that method.*

Who the perſon is to whom you allege I have aſcribed it, it is impoſſible for me to conjecture. Mr Cooper is the only perſon to whom I have referred on that ſubject; and he is, as far as I know, the only perſon, beſides yourſelf, who at preſent recommends the application of ligatures to the gut, with a view to procure re-union of its divided edges. This, however, he does in a manner eſſentially different from that recommended by you, which he, from experiments, regards as impracticable.

Though

Though it had completely eſcaped me at the time of writing my Theſis, that the method of paſſing the upper extremity of the gut within the under, and retaining it in that ſituation by ligature, was recommended by you, I was by no means ignorant of the practice, having ſeen in Heiſter's Inſtitutions of Surgery, that it had been ſucceſsfully employed, in a woman affected with Hernia, by *Ramdohrius*, *previous to the year* 1730, and knowing that various attempts have been made ſince that time to follow this practice, in the way of experiment, in the human ſubject, as well as in brute animals.

Among other reaſons for omitting the mention of this practice, were it neceſſary to aſſign any, I might allege the very decided diſapprobation it received a conſiderable time ago, in the Edinburgh Medical Eſſays, from your Father, whom I have always been taught to regard as the higheſt ſurgical authority this country has to boaſt of; and more lately from Mr Cooper, in his very valuable work on Hernia.

After this ſtatement, I hope that you will be convinced, that the aſſertion you made in your claſs was founded in error; and I feel confident that you will do away publicly the unfavourable impreſſion which that aſſertion was calculated to make on the minds of your pupils.

I am, Sir, your obedient ſervant,

(Signed) WILLIAM WOOD.

Mr

Mr Wood to Dr Monro.

SIR, *Edinburgh, April* 21. 1807.

I had hoped, that the ſtatement contained in my letter to you of the 16th inſtant, would have induced you to have retracted the charge, which you publicly brought againſt me, of having attributed to another perſon the merit of an improvement which you ſeem to think due to yourſelf,—a charge which you muſt now be convinced *was altogether without foundation.*

It is therefore with no ſmall degree of ſurpriſe I have been informed, by ſeveral very reſpectable ſtudents, that, inſtead of retracting this charge, as I had expected, in your lecture of yeſterday, you endeavoured to convey to your pupils the idea of my having apologiſed to you for a culpable omiſſion; and that you did this by reading a part, and a ſmall part only, of a ſentence in my letter, uncandidly omitting the connecting clauſes, and by this omiſſion giving to my letter the ſemblance of an apology, when in fact you know that it required one from you.

I have been diſtinctly informed, that the only words of my letter which you read were, "it had "completely eſcaped me at the time of writing my "Theſis, that the method of paſſing the upper ex-"tremity of the gut within the under was recom-"mended by you."

After

After this ſecond attempt to do me publicly an act of injuſtice, I beg leave to inform you, that unleſs I have immediate reaſon to believe, that the whole of the letter which I did myſelf the honour to addreſs to you, will be fairly read to the gentlemen who attend your lectures, I ſhall feel myſelf under the diſagreeable neceſſity of making the explanation which it contains as public as the charge you brought againſt me.

I am, Sir, your obedient ſervant,

(Signed) WILLIAM WOOD.

Dr MONRO *to Mr* WOOD.

SIR, *Edinburgh, April* 22. 1807.

I received yeſterday afternoon a third letter from you, which I ſuppoſe muſt have proceeded from your not having got an exact account of what I ſaid on Tueſday in my lecture to the ſtudents.

I then told them, that, ſince my laſt lecture, you had ſent me a letter, from which I would read to them the following paragraph :

" It had completely eſcaped me at the time of " writing my Theſis, that the method of paſſing " the upper extremity of the gut within the under,

" and

" and retaining it in that ſituation by ligature, was " recommended by you."

I added, that I had no reaſon to doubt your veracity, eſpecially as I had always entertained a good opinion of you; and that I was well pleaſed, on your account as well as my own, that my mention of your name had brought on a ſatisfactory explanation.

You now complain, that the paragraph I read gave to your letter the ſemblance of an apology; but ſurely no perſon who thinks could interpret it in that manner, as no *apology* can be neceſſary for a perſon's not mentioning what had eſcaped his memory. *An explanation* only was wanted; and this, by the paragraph I had read, was fully given by you, and freed you from all blame.

You ſaid, in your Theſis, (page 51) " That " the method Mr Cooper recommended he was led " to adopt from the ſucceſsful reſult of ſome very " intereſting experiments made on animals by Mr " Thomſon and himſelf;' which certainly implied that the revival of the attempt of rejoining the divided parts of an inteſtine was to be aſcribed by you to Mr Thomſon, or to him and Mr Cooper: which was all I meant, or could be ſuppoſed to mean, as their particular manner of rejoining them was publiſhed, and was different from mine.

I am, Sir, your obedient ſervant,

(Signed) ALEX. MONRO, *ſen.*

Mr

Mr WOOD *to Dr* MONRO.

SIR, *Edinburgh, April* 23. 1807.

IN obtruding myſelf again on your notice, I have no wiſh to diminiſh in any degree the ſatisfaction which the *explanation*, ſuch as it really was, contained in my letter of the 16th, has given you; nor ſhould I now have taken this liberty, had not your letter of yeſterday appeared to me to require ſome animadverſion. In anſwer to that part of your letter in which you ſay, "*an explanation* only was wanted, "and this, by the paragraph I had read, was fully "given by you, and freed you from all blame;" I have to obſerve, that not being conſcious of having incurred any blame by the omiſſion of which you complained, I never meant to give you any thing which could be fairly conſtrued into *explanation* or *apology;* and it was only by leaving out the moſt material parts of the ſentence, of which you read a part, and a ſmall part only, to your ſtudents, that it was poſſible for you to have extracted any ſuch meaning from my letter. My ſtatement was, "*Though* "it had completely eſcaped me at the time of wri- "ting my Theſis, that the method of paſſing the "upper extremity of the gut within the under, and "retaining it in that ſituation by ligature, was re- "commended by you, I was by no means ignorant "of the practice, having ſeen in Heiſter's Inſtitu-

"tions

" tions of Surgery, that it had been ſucceſsfully " employed in a woman affected with Hernia, *by* " *Ramdohrius*, *previous to the year* 1730, and know- " ing that various attempts have been made ſince " that time to follow this practice, in the way of " experiment, in the human ſubject, as well as in " brute animals." From this, for reaſons beſt known to yourſelf, you read only, " it had com- " pletely eſcaped me at the time of writing my " Theſis, that the method of paſſing the upper " extremity of the gut within the under, and re- " taining it in that ſituation by ligature, was re- " commended by you;" adding, " I was well plea- " ſed on your account, as well as my own, that " my mention of your name had brought on a ſatiſ- " factory explanation."

Mr Thomſon, whoſe name you have introduced into this correſpondence, and whom the greater part of your ſtudents underſtood to be the perſon to whom you alluded in ſpeaking of my Theſis, in the two courſes of his lectures which I have had the pleaſure of attending, deſcribed at great length the different modes of ſtitching divided inteſtines, which had been recommended, from the time that Celſus firſt mentioned the practice to the preſent day. But in ſhewing the reſults of his experiments, which Mr Cooper has deſcribed, he took particular pains to caution his ſtudents from inferring, becauſe the practice of ſtitching inteſtines had often ſucceeded in brute animals,

animals, and in a few inſtances alſo in the human ſubject, that it was one which ſhould be followed in the diſeaſed ſtate of the inteſtines uſually accompanying ſtrangulated hernia. This being the preciſe ſtate of the fact, in ſo far as Mr Thomſon can be ſuppoſed to be the perſon alluded to by you, I muſt leave it for Mr Cooper to juſtify himſelf from the charge (upon whom it now falls, if indeed it falls any where,) of having *aſſumed* an improvement, which, in mentioning it to your ſtudents, you endeavoured to make them believe you had originally ſuggeſted, though, in your laſt letter to me, you only claim the merit of having revived it; and to diſcuſs with you the comparative advantages and diſadvantages of the *Ramdohrian method* of ſtitching inteſtines, and that which he himſelf has propoſed.

I have only to add, that I have ſent the whole of this correſpondence to the Preſs, that the gentlemen attending your Lectures may have an opportunity of judging with what degree of fairneſs, candour, or juſtice, you have twice publicly, in your Claſs, made mention of my name.

I am, Sir, your obedient ſervant,

(Signed) WILLIAM WOOD.